

[Clint Padgitt]

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FOLKLORE

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Consultant - Clint Padgitt, Padgitt Co., Franklin and 5th Sts., Waco, Texas.

My grandfather was Captain Shapley P. Ross. In 1849 he built a cabin on the bank of the Brazos river near Waco Spring. He and other of the older members of the family told me as a boy of the things the people did in the pioneer days.

My grandfather was in bed with the measles about the year 1850, as well as I recall, when one day a band of Comanche Indians was seen coming to the house. My grandfather told my grandmother that the Indians would probably kill him and take her and the two little boys captives, and if they did, for her to take a cloth with her and tear pieces of it off and drop them [as?] they went along, and the settlers would find them and possibly find her. The chief came to the door and started in, but when he saw grandfather lying there in bed with the measles broken out on his face the Indian was afraid of him, and did not come in. He told grandmother that they wanted beef and watermelons, and to send the

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boys to show them where the beef and melons were. The boys went with the Indians, and their parents never expected to see them alive again, but they came back all right. The Indians took the meat and melons and went on without molesting the family any further. The Indians were superstitious about sick people and of course knew enough to know that what grandfather had they might get and spread it through the tribe. C12 - [?] - Texas

About twenty-five years later grandfather was at the Dallas Fair, and saw a band of Indians which were there on exhibition. When he came to them, one of them spoke to him and told him that he remembered his as the sick man, that it was his band which had come to grandfather's house that day. The Indian told him that they admired the boys very much for their bravery in going with the Indians. 2 In the early Fifties my grandfather killed a Comanche Chief known as Bigfoot, who was one of the greatest chiefs of that tribe and the most powerful one at the time of his death. The story of the fight during which grandfather killed the chief is told in Wilbarger's Indian Depredations in Texas. About two years after the fight one evening when Placedore, a former chief of the [Tonkawa?] tribe, and who was a faithful friend of grandfathers; was sitting on the front porch a Comanche came to the house and said he wished to see Captain Ross. Placedore told him to leave, that Captain Ross did not wish to see him. The Comanche then said, "I am a brother of Bigfoot, who Captain Ross killed. My brother was a very great man, but Captain Ross killed him, and he is a greater man, then, than my brother. I wish to live with Captain Ross because he is a great man." Placedore again told him to leave, that they did not want him there. Captain Ross came up then. Placedore said not to allow the Comanche to stay, that he meant treachery and would probably kill the captain. The Comanche said he would prove that he would be faithful. He went to a mesquite tree growing in the yard and cut a thorn three or four inches long. He took a fold of his flesh over his stomach and thrust the thorn through it, then with his knife cut off the ends of the thorn. Placedore and grandfather knew then that the Comanche would be faithful as that was the Indian way of proving loyalty. He was allowed to remain, and stayed with grandfather ten years. I do not now remember the Comanche's name. This occurred about the year 1855.

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My mother, Kate Ross was supposed to be the first white girl born in Waco. My uncle, Robert S. Ross, was/ thought the first white child born in McLennan county. He was born under a tree on what is now the Price Standifer farm, before the cabin grandfather was building was completed.

I remember my mother telling me that when she was a little girl, in the early Fifties, great herds of buffalo would come to Waco, which was then only a village of scattered houses among fields of corn and other crops. The buffalo 3 would come toward Waco from the north on their migration to the south, and would, if not turned, go right through the village and the fields and destroy all the crops. When the buffalo were seen coming the alarm would be given by shouting, "Here come the buffalo", and ringing a bell. Then all the people would stop what they were doing and go north of the town in their wagons and make a line of the wagons around the town. They would take guns, dishpans and anything else they could make a noise with, and turn the buffalo around the town and the crops. Then for a day or two the men would shoot what buffalo they wanted for their winter supply of meat.

There was a flat-bottomed steamboat called the "Katie Ross" after my mother, which ran up and down the Brazos from Waco carrying supplies to settlements along the river. This was about 1860. I don't remember who it was owned the steamboat.

Along during the Seventies men who were [fleet?] of foot would go from settlement to settlement and challenge anybody to a footrace, and those racers and the people of the settlements would bet on the races. One of these men was called Deerfoot, which was probably a nickname, as he was very fast and had beaten every man who ran against him. He and the men with him come to Waco and said they had \$2,500 in gold which they would bet that Deerfoot could beat any man in Waco. The citizens made up a purse of \$2,500, to bet on a man they considered could beat Deerfoot. All this money, \$5,000, was

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piled on a blanket. The Waco man way outran Deerfoot. After that the man from Waco ran other races and always won.

There used to be a racetrack in the Seventies where Oakwood cemetary now stands. There are still in trees in and the cemetary rings which were used for tying horses. Lots of people now wonder what those rings were for. In 1875 there was a man wanted to make a record for the shortest time carrying mail twenty miles by riding around the racetrack. He wore out the horse he started with, then he used all his horses one after another, and then the 4 people got so interested in seeing him make a record that they took their horses from their wagons and buggies and also let have their saddle horses to ride so he could break the record.